LITERATURE ON REEL: APPLICATION OF LINDA COSTANZO CAHIR'S ADAPTATION THEORY TO THE FILM ADAPTATIONS OF SELECTED WORKS OF DAN BROWN AND JOHN PATRICK SHANLEY

SYNOPSIS

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Films have become a part of everyday life. Like literature, films instruct and at the same time entertain the audience, challenging morals and transforming opinions. The film industry all over the world has grown rapidly due to people's interest in making and watching films. Film Studies is an academic discipline that deals with various theoretical, historical, and critical approaches to cinema which emerged first in Europe and America in the last part of the nineteenth century. It deals with the basic understanding of the technical aspects of film, including cinematography, editing, acting, *mise-en-scène*, and sound. With the advent of Film Studies in the twenty first century many theories related to Film Studies gained popularity, as, the Apparatus Theory, Adaptation Theory, Auteur Theory, Cognitive Theory, Linguistic Theory, Psychoanalytical Theory, Schreiber Theory, Screen Theory and Structuralist Theory. Today, Film Studies exists worldwide as a discipline with specific schools dedicated to it.

Film Studies is an interdisciplinary subject and has close association with the literary field, where writers and filmmakers are consciously using the technique of "intertextuality"[1] to develop their plots with various genres, artistic styles, elements and others, to project serious issues. They are using dynamic devices of allusion, myth, history, song, epigraph, characters etc., in order to recreate and reconstruct the given interpretation in the work of art.

The first step to cinema is literature. Literature provides raw material in the production of an adaptation. Literature is an art which is developed through writing and cinema through visual representation and effects, like, with the use of sound, effects, lighting, *mise-en-scene*, actors and music, it brings to life the words on screen. The relationship between cinema and literature is very complicated. Hence it is the duty of the critic to explore the essence of cinema and provide a conceptualized framework to understand the relation of film with literature.

Adaptation Theory is one such theory which connects literature and cinema. Many works of literature of different genres, like novel, novella, prose, poetry, and drama etc., have been adapted to films. Adaptation, as defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is "An altered or amended version of a text, musical composition, etc., one adapted for filming, broadcasting, or production on the stage from a novel or similar literary source"[2].

Although screen adaptations of literature have been around since the beginning of cinema and have provoked the most intense debates among the public at large, the subject has been long neglected in literary and Film Studies. Up until a decade ago, adaptation was normally regarded as an area unworthy of sustained academic study. The first half of the twentieth century saw the adaptation as "impure cinema" and resented the dependency of film on literature, especially during the period in which film was struggling to be regarded as "the new literature", an art form in its own right. Writers and literary critics in the first half of the twentieth century considered film adaptations as abominations, crude usurpations of literary masterpieces that threatened both literacy and the book itself. Virginia Woolf wrote an article in her essay, titled *The Cinema,* after watching *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, a 1920 German expressionist film. In this essay she criticises literary adaptations, calling film the "predator" and literary texts the "prey", where the filmmakers rely on well known pieces of literature to form a solid base for their film. She regarded films as degrading, with audience becoming "savages" of the twentieth century watching such pictures"[3].

The works written by twenty first century adaptation theorists, like Kamilla Elliott, Linda Hutcheon, Thomas Leitch and Robert Stam, challenged the way the audience thought about literature, film and television, focusing on various other aspects across the transmedia model concentrating on intertextuality and pointing out the fact that adaptation helps in the survival of the original work. It also states the idea that adaptation is as much an urge to consume, erase or question an adapted text as a desire to pay a tribute to it by re-interpretation and re-creation.

According to Thomas Leitch "Adaptation is a process that is concerned with academic, literary, and film traditions of many sorts to be limited and categorized as a simple attempt to faithfully transpose a narrative from one medium to another, and as a process that is a constant rewriting of what came before it"[4].

A successful adaptation, according to Hutcheon, balances "the comfort of ritual and recognition with the delight of surprise and novelty"[5] not only carrying the aura with it, but contributing to its continual expansion.

Various adaptation theorists are contributing to the field of Film Studies and literature, and one such theorist is Dr. Linda Costanzo Cahir, an Associate Professor of English/ Education and the

Coordinator of the Secondary Education Program at Kean University in Union, NJ. Linda Cahir's book *Literature into Film: Theory and Practical Approaches* (2006) was the recipient of the prestigious literature Association Welsh award for excellence in adaptation studies. She was the editor of the *Edith Wharton Review* 2014-15 and the editor of *Literature/Film Quarterly* and the author of many book chapters and Peer reviewed journal articles. Her first book *Solitude and Society in the Works of Herman Melville and Edith Wharton* is now in its fourth printing. The above book is based on an unpublished letter she found in Yale University's rare book collections[6].

Dr. Cahir's essay *Narratological Parallels in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness and Francis Ford Coppola's Apocalypse Now.* It is considered the seminal study on this topic it has been translated into Italian and Turkish languages and reprinted by Oxford University Press[7].

She was the first recipient in New Jersey of the National Endowment for the Arts Grant for the Big Read of *Edith Wharton's The Age of Innocence.* She holds an MA in Film Studies and a Doctorate in Literature both from NYU. Her dissertation was awarded the competitive Pen and Carnwath Calendar Dissertation Fellowship[8].

Cahir's book *Literature into Film: Theory and Practical Approaches* is a comprehensive guide to literature-based films. It focuses on recognizing and appreciating the inherent difficulties encountered when basing a film on a literary work, be it a novel, novella, play or short story. It establishes a contextual and theoretical basis to help the reader understand the relationship between such movies and the original texts as well as the reader's own individual responses to these productions. Individual chapters deal with the specific issues and difficulties raised by each of these genres, providing an overview backed up by case studies of specific film translations. Films and literary works receiving this treatment include *The Unbearable Lightness of Being, The Manchurian Candidate* (1962), *Lady Windemere's Fan* by Oscar Wilde and Shakespeare's *Henry V.* Interspersed throughout the text are suggestions for activities the students can use to enhance their appreciation and understanding of the films. Thus the book helps the readers to deepen their experience of literature based films [9]

Cahir in her book gives a comprehensive explanation of the word adaptation which according to her means, "to alter or function of any entity so that it is better fitted to survive and multiply in its new environment", this new environment thus gives scope for the reinterpretation of the existing text, in a

conducive manner, which comes like a challenge both for the producer and the audience where they have to translate words into images by interpreting and exploiting the source text.

The first step in exploring the merits of a literature based films is to see them as “translations” of the source material and to understand the difference between “adaptation” and “translation”. As we know that “to adapt" means to alter the structure or function of any entity accordingly so that it is able to survive and multiply in its new environment, the word “Translation” is used in contrast to the word “adaptation”, which is to move a text from one language to another. This translation takes place between the language of literature and the language of film, where the filmmakers interpret the given literary text and make necessary changes while adapting the same into a movie. Through the process of translation a fully new text (a materially different entity) is made, one which has a strong relationship with its original text, yet is fully independent of it.

She further states that every literature based film is the translation of the original text where every act of translation is simultaneously an act of interpretation. When a literary work undergoes the process of translation, a new text emerges which is completely a new entity and a work, which is independent from its literary source in its form and function. At last, the film translators of literature face the same challenges, dilemmas, interpretive choices, latitudes and responsibilities that any translator may face while translating the language of literature into the language of film.

According to Cahir literature based films should be seen as translations of the source text. For this Cahir proposes three modes of “Translations” to be adopted by the filmmakers. These three translations are as follows, the “literal translation”, the “traditional” and the “radical translation”.

In the “literal translation” the plot, setting and other intricate details share close resemblance with the source text, no major changes are made while adopting this type of translation. The film stays as near to the written text with little or no addition of scenes. In a literal film translation, the filmmakers are bound to follow the original story. All the details mentioned in the source text, like, characters, setting and plot are recreated by using visual effects, but share close resemblance with the source text. But according to Cahir, while following this mode of translation the filmmakers fail to reach the depths of the book’s ideas as given by the writer.

The second mode of translation which is the "traditional translation" maintains the overall traits of the book (its plot, settings, and stylistic conventions) but changes particular details in those particular ways that the film- makers see as necessary and fitting to their movie. These changes are made according to the filmmakers interpretive insight or stylistic interests, keeping in mind the films length and duration, its budget and the interest and the taste of the audience. In a traditional film translation of a literary text, scenes are added or deleted as needed; characters are often composites and the settings are frequently modified in ways that make them more visually interesting and more cost effective.

The third mode of translation is the "radical translation" which reshapes the book in extreme and revolutionary ways both as a means of interpreting the literature and of making the film a more fully independent work. Radical translations are not unique to film as the filmmaker might revolutionise the plot and structure. Radical translations allow for multicultural explorations of literary texts, as literature generated by one culture can be explored and reconstituted in other cultures.

She further states the four fundamental principles for a successful film adaptation of any literary genre which the filmmakers should try to adopt in their films.

According to Cahir the first fundamental principle is that the film must communicate ideas concerning the integral meaning and value of the literary text, as the filmmakers interpret it. An aesthetically successful literature based film will be more than a plot summary of the book. It will provide more information rather than giving a visual recap of the words given on the text. Whereas, the movie will communicate definite ideas concerning the meaning and value of the literary text, as the filmmakers interpret that meaning and value. The success of the film should not be measured against the degree to which the viewer agrees with the filmmakers interpretive notions about the source literature, but, instead against the degree to which the filmmakers successfully communicate their ideas.

The second principle to be kept in mind is this that the integral meaning of the work needs to be expressed through a collaboration of filmmaking techniques employed, like, Sound, Lighting, Music, Camera Shots and Camera Angles and Editing. Since film is largely a collaborative art form, each of the components must work in an aesthetic harmony vision. The screenwriter, the cinematographer, the director, the art department, and the actors must all bring distinctive skills that mesh with the skills of

the others. The purpose of filmmaking is to combine all the collaborating filmmaking entities resulting in one unified work.

The third principle is that, the film must then demonstrate an audacity to create a work apart, that exploits the literary text in such a way, that a self relish but a related offspring is born. The successful novel based film should be able to exist apart from the book. In such a condition a successful foreign language translation will preserve what is integral from the original novel by utilising what is appropriate, beautiful and effective from the translated language. The film will do the same by adopting what is beautiful and effective from cinematic language, while retaining what is essential from the novel.

At last, the film made cannot be so self-governing as to be completely independent of or antithetical to the source material. Novel based films must strike the right balance. They must exercise an independence from the book that enables them to stand as meaningful works of art on their own. It should not be so self-governing as to have an in-name- only relationship to the source book. The greatest novel- based films should be able to exist apart from the book because they are films, not just filmed-books. Such movies maximise the very elements that are distinctively inherent to film, while preserving the essential features of the literary text.

According to Cahir all the literary genres and their adaptations can be analysed on the basis of the common elements between the genre of literature and film, i .e., Narration, Time and Temporality, Theme, Setting, Characterization, Plot, Style and Dialogues, employed with film techniques like Sound, Music, Lighting, Camera Angles and Camera Shots and Editing.

Thus the Adaptation Theory of Cahir can be applied to any literary group. The works chosen for this thesis belong to three different literary genres, which are, novels and plays. The shortlisted works are as follows; the novels *Inferno* and *Angels & Demons* by Dan Brown; and the plays, *Doubt: A Parable* and *Outside Mullinger* by the American playwright John Patrick Shanley.

The first writer chosen for the present study is Daniel Gerhard Brown, who was born on June 22nd, 1964, in Exeter, New Hampshire. Brown attended Exeter's public schools until the ninth grade. He grew up on the campus of Phillips Exeter Academy, where his father, Richard G. Brown, was a teacher of mathematics and wrote textbooks. Brown's interest in secrets and puzzles stems from their presence in his household as a child, where codes and ciphers were the linchpin tying together the

mathematics, music, and languages in which his parents worked. The young Brown spent hours working out anagrams and crossword puzzles, and he and his siblings participated in elaborate treasure hunts devised by their father on birthdays and holidays which are even evident in his work[10]. He is best known for his thriller novels, including the Robert Langdon novels *Angels & Demons*, *The Da Vinci Code*, *The Lost Symbol*, *Inferno* and *Origin*. His novels are treasure hunts that usually take place over a period of twenty four hours.

The first work in the series is *Angels & Demons*, an explosive international thriller careens from enlightening epiphanies to dark truths as the battle between science and religion which turns to war. Embarking on a frantic hunt through sealed crypts, dangerous catacombs, deserted cathedrals, and even to the heart of the most secretive vault on earth, Langdon and Vetra follow a four hundred year old trail of ancient symbols that snakes across Rome toward the long-forgotten Illuminati lair, a secret location that contains the only hope for Vatican salvation. In In the novel and adaptation there has been a murder at the CERN (Conseil Européen pour la Recherche Nucléaire) laboratory involving the theft of a canister of antimatter, which if not recovered before 24 hours, will explode. The canister has been taken to Vatican City by the Illuminati, who left their name branded on the chest of a murdered CERN physicist[11].

Langdon, who identified the brand as authentically Illuminati, along with the dead physicist's daughter, Vittoria, go to Vatican City. The Pope has just died and the candidates for the papacy are missing. Langdon begins a search for the kidnapped cardinals expecting the antimatter to be with them. He is joined by a man named Ventresca who was close to the Pope and worked with the Vatican Swiss Guard. Langdon then pursues the Illuminati by following the path given to those who seek entry into the secret society. In Rome, he discovers all four cardinals murdered in ways that echo the elements earth, wind, water and fire, each branded with an ambigram corresponding to their element. During the pursuit, Vittoria is kidnapped and Langdon continues on in search of the Illuminati, now for her rescue as well. With little time to spare, the Camerlengo, Ventresca, claims that a revelation from God has shown him the location off the antimatter: in the catacombs. The time bomb is found and is taken into the sky where it explodes harmlessly after a heart stopping moment that could have ended Langdon's life. Ventresca is considered for the papacy because of his miraculous vision, but it is revealed

that the Camerlengo poisoned the Pope under the guise of the name Janus (revealing Janus' real identity) for the Pope's breach of his chastity vows and his sympathy to the natural sciences. The Camerlengo burns himself alive publicly to deal with his guilt and shame. Langdon and Vittoria consummate their love and Langdon receives the Illuminati diamond to be returned to the Vatican through his final will[12].

The second novel and adaptation is Dan Brown's international best-seller novel *Inferno*, published in 2013 and the adaptation made on the same in the year 2016, starring Tom Hanks, a mystery thriller where, Harvard University professor Robert Langdon wakes up in a hospital room in Florence, Italy, with no memory of what has changed over the last few days, but being plagued with hellish visions. He and his companion try to solve a trail left by Bertrand Zobrist, a dangerously unstable villain who believed that rigorous measures were necessary to reduce the Earth's growing population, and who committed suicide three days earlier after being chased by armed government agents.

Inferno by Dan Brown is highly acclaimed and riveting thriller, which certainly returns the right elements of Dan Brown's previous books and it really pulls his craftsmanship to the top with this high stake novel. Against the whole backdrop, Robert is battling a chilling grapples and adversary with his ingenious riddle which pulls him onto landscape of futuristic science, classic art and secret passageways.

The next writer is John Patrick Shanley, the 1988 Academy Award Winner for Best Original Screenplay for the film *Moonstruck.* His play, *Doubt*: *A Parable*, won the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for Drama and the 2005 Tony Award for Best Play. Shanley was born into an Irish-American family in The Bronx, New York City. His mother worked as a telephone operator, and his father was a meatpacker. Shanley's academic career did not begin well, but ultimately he graduated from New York University with honours. In his program bio for the Broadway production of *Doubt: A Parable*, he mentions that he was "thrown out of St. Helena's kindergarten, banned from St. Anthony's hot lunch program and expelled from Cardinal Spellman High School. He was heavily influenced by one of his first teachers, Sister Margaret McEntee, on whom he based the character of Sister James in his play, *Doubt*[13]. Shanley is the author of more than twenty three plays, which have been translated and performed around the world, including 80 productions a year in North America. He has often directed his own productions.

Sister Aloysius Beauvier, the stern nun, of the play believes that one of the priests at the St.

Nicholas Catholic Church and school has been molesting a twelve-year-old boy named Donald Muller, the school's only African-American student. The play concludes with a face to face confrontation between Sister Aloysius and Father Flynn as she attempts to get the truth out of the priest.

Another play *Outside Mullingar* and the adaptation made on the same, titled *Wild Mountain Thyme* by Shanley is about the romance of Anthony and Rosemary, neighbours in rural Ireland, who are nearing their middle years. Anthony Rielly and Rosemary Muldoon have grown up next to each other on two farms. Rosemary fell in love with Anthony at the age of six, and is convinced that he will eventually come to her. Anthony had his heart broken as a young man, and hasn't dared open it to another woman since. Forty years later, the two of them are still living next to each other, instead of together. With a small land feud happening between the two families, it seems unlikely that a romance will ever happen. Rosemary's determination, however, eventually brings the two of the together, and two unlikely souls eventually find happiness[14].

A brief literature review of the studies done on these chosen works is mentioned below:

Welsh James; Peter Lev, eds., in their article *The Literature/Film Reader: Issues of Adaptation*, issue, 22, May 2008, Lanham Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2007. ://www.imageandnarrative.be write about the present and future of screen adaptations and adaptation studies.

Adam Mertes, in his article on the first chapter of "Nature of Film Translation: Literal, Traditional, and Radical" Cahir, Linda Costanzo, *Literature Into Film: Theory and Practical Approaches*. Jefferson: McFarland, 2006. Print. meeusencriticalarticles.wordpress.com, says that the perception of the spectators makes the film good or bad. He goes on to explain how each literature based film is its own work and the director adapts the same for a certain reason.

Stephen Becker, in his article, *Doubt the play vs. Doubt the Film.* 29th December 2008 ://artandseek.org, analyses the play *Doubt* and its adaptation highlighting only the positive aspects and negating the negative ones. He also writes that the story in the book and play remain the same, but the way the story is presented leads to different experiences.

Sandra Sirangelo Maggio, Valter Henrique, in the essay, *The Playwright as a Translator of Himself: Doubt, a Parable on the Page and on the Screen*, examines the strategies used by Shanley to keep the possibility of interpretation open as he translates his own work from page to screen.

Looking at the list of the major studies covered on the chosen genres, it would not be wrong to conclude that less efforts have been made by any researcher to apply Linda Costanzo Cahir's Adaptation Theory to the chosen literary works. Though critics have given their reviews on the adapted works which are made into films, yet no researcher has taken up the task of applying Linda Costanzo Cahir's theory to the shortlisted works.

The relationship between adaptation and literature is a complex one, as both cinema and literature are interdependent yet, independent in their respective fields. Hence it would also be interesting to draw the differences and similarities between the original work and the cinematic adaptation, as the original incidents, events and thoughts of a work are transmitted into a visual reality.

Hence the prospects to apply the theory and to draw the difference and similarity between the two art forms which will be discussed in the conclusion of the study, are very bright and the study seems promising as an interesting and fruitful venture.

Thus, the objectives of the thesis will be:

- To study the origin and development of cinema and film studies.
- To make an in-depth analysis of Cahir's Adaptation Theory.
- To apply Cahir's Adaptation Theory to the selected adaptations.
- To draw a comparison between selected film adaptations and the literary texts.
- To study the contribution of Cahir's Adaptation theory to Film Studies.

Thus, keeping the objectives in mind, the chapter scheme of the thesis is proposed as:

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

CHAPTER 2: Study of Linda Costanzo Cahir's Adaptation Theory

CHAPTER 3: Application of Cahir's Adaptation Theory to Dan Brown's Selected Adaptations

CHAPTER 4: Application of Cahir's Adaptation Theory to John Patrick Shanley's Selected Adaptations

CHAPTER 5: Conclusion

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